

MINUTES

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 08, 2021

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman Ehardt, Vice Chairman Wisniewski, Representatives Vander Woude, Horman, Scott, Amador, Armstrong, Furniss, Hartgen, Lickley, Young, Adams, Yamamoto, Chew (Colwell), Necochea, Nash

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. Young

GUESTS: Mary Anne Nelson, Jerri Henry, Tiffany Floyd, Michael McCurdy, Jess Byrne, DEQ; Shelley Roberts, IRWA; Nick Veldhouse, IAHD

Chairman Ehardt called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Necochea** made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2021 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

MOTION: **Rep. Vander Woude** made a motion to **HOLD Docket No. 58-0000-2000F** for time certain, February 24, 2021.

Rob Sepich, Budget and Policy Analyst for LSO gave an overview of the Public Utilities Commission dedicated fund methodology to clarify previous committee questions. He explained the goal of PUC is to keep cash balances equal to half the revenue fund, to date the balance is three million dollars.

Mr. Sepich answered the 25% reduction in budget came from the Chinden campus move, which came under budget last fiscal year.

Maria Barratt-Riley, Executive Director of Idaho Public Utilities explained payments are made to PUC May 15 and Nov 15. The 6 month cash balance helps pay bills until the semi-annual payments are received. Committee members had concerns that other agencies carry much lower than 50% cash balances. Ms. Barratt-Riley pointed out that PUC has the rare exception of having no code to direct how much can be held. Once in the last 8 years a committee asked PUC to take a reduction as part of the assessment process to make up for a high cash balance. She responded to committee questions, when payments are delinquent the collection process begins with letters, then late fees are charged, and if necessary the attorney general sends letters, but it's never gone beyond that point to receive a payment. She reported that PUC safeguards rail waste with 2 inspectors that do on-site inspections and examine paperwork. In cases of derailments, PUC is notified and works closely with federal partners. Ms. Barratt-Riley clarified to the committee that deregulation of electric utilities would happen in statute.

RS 28419: **Roy Eiguren** presented **RS 28419**, water quality. This legislation creates a Big Payette Lake water quality council and Lake Cascade water quality council in Valley County. The primary responsibility of each council is to authorize scientific studies as well as collect scientific data on the respective lakes. Based on the information the council will make recommendations to appropriate local, state and federal agencies to improve water quality. The councils do not have regulatory authority of any type.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Eiguren** explained the water quality councils cannot tax citizens. He clarified that there is no other mechanism that provides authority to make recommendations to local, state and federal agencies. There is also not a mechanism to direct funds with state agencies, so the council raises private funds to provide money for studies. In explanation of why this legislation is necessary, Mr. Eiguren confirmed that DEQ is not able to bring multiple agencies together to discuss concerns. They worked closely with DEQ for this legislation. He clarified that the council did not seek out support from Idaho Conservation League and Trout Unlimited.

MOTION: **Rep.Necochea** made a motion to introduce **RS 28419. Motion carried by voice vote. Rep Scott** requested to be recorded as voting **NAY**.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

Representative Ehardt
Chair

Maggie Price
Secretary